

## CLAIMS

I claim:

- [c1] 1. A computer-implemented method for playing a game, the method comprising:
- receiving a request from a first player to enable gate crashing in the game;
  - in response to the request from the first player, transmitting information to a remote computer;
  - in response to transmitting the information to the remote computer, receiving a request from a second player to participate in the game;
  - and
  - in response to the request from the second player to participate in the game, transitioning control of a character in the game from a program routine to the second player.
- [c2] 2. The method of claim 1 wherein transmitting information to the remote computer includes transmitting information about the game to the remote computer.
- [c3] 3. The method of claim 1 wherein transmitting information to the remote computer includes transmitting information about the first player to the remote computer.
- [c4] 4. The method of claim 1 wherein receiving a request from a second player to participate in the game includes receiving a non-player character selection from the second player.
- [c5] 5. The method of claim 1 wherein transitioning control of a character in the game from a program routine to the second player includes transitioning control without signaling the first player.

- [c6] 6. A computer-implemented method for playing a game, the method comprising:
- receiving a request from a first player to initiate the game in single-player mode;
  - receiving a first control input from the first player;
  - controlling a first character in response to the first control input received from the first player;
  - controlling a second character in response to computer-readable instructions;
  - receiving a request from a second player to control the second character;
  - in response to the request from the second player, transitioning control of the second character from the computer-readable instructions to the second player;
  - receiving a second control input from the second player; and
  - controlling the second character in response to the second control input received from the second player.
- [c7] 7. The method of claim 6 wherein receiving a first control input from the first player includes receiving a first control input via a first game console operably connected to a first gaming system, and wherein receiving a second control input from the second player includes receiving a second control input via a second game console operably connected to a second gaming system remote from the first gaming system.
- [c8] 8. The method of claim 6 wherein transitioning control of the second character from the computer-readable instructions to the second player includes transitioning control in the absence of notifying the first player.
- [c9] 9. The method of claim 6, further comprising:
- receiving a third control input from the second player; and

if the second character is still active in the game, controlling the second game character in response to the third control input received from the second player; and

if the second character is no longer active in the game, controlling a third game character in response to the third control input received from the second player.

[c10] 10. A computer-implemented method for playing a game, the method comprising:

receiving information about one or more games from a remote computer;  
displaying at least a portion of the received information about the games;  
receiving a request to gate crash at least one of the games; and  
in response to receiving the request to gate crash, transmitting the request to the remote computer.

[c11] 11. The method of claim 10 wherein receiving information about one or more games from a remote computer includes receiving information about one or more non-player characters participating in the games, and wherein the method further comprises receiving a character selection corresponding to at least one of the one or more non-player characters.

[c12] 12. The method of claim 10, further comprising sorting the information about the games, and wherein displaying at least a portion of the received information includes displaying at least a portion of the sorted information.

[c13] 13. The method of claim 10, further comprising in response to transmitting the request to gate crash to the remote computer, implementing a peer-to-peer connection with a remote gaming system.

- [c14] 14. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing steps comprising: /
- receiving a request from a first player to enable gate crashing in a game;
  - in response to the request from the first player, transmitting information to a remote computer;
  - in response to transmitting the information to the remote computer, receiving a request from a second player to participate in the game;
  - and
  - in response to the request from the second player to participate in the game, transitioning control of a character in the game from a program routine to the second player.
- [c15] 15. The computer-readable medium of claim 14 wherein transmitting information to the remote computer includes transmitting information about the first player to the remote computer.
- [c16] 16. The computer-readable medium of claim 14 wherein transmitting information to the remote computer includes transmitting information about the game to the remote computer.
- [c17] 17. The computer-readable medium of claim 14 wherein receiving a request from a second player to participate in the game includes receiving a character selection from the second player.
- [c18] 18. The computer-readable of claim 14 wherein the first player controls a first character, and wherein transitioning control of a character in the game from a program routine to the second player includes transitioning control of a second character, and wherein the steps further comprise:
- receiving a first control input from the first player via a first game console operably connected to a first gaming system;

controlling the first character in response to the first control input received from the first player;  
receiving a second control input from the second player via a second game console operably connected to a second gaming system remote from the first gaming system; and  
controlling the second character in response to the second control input received from the second player.

[c19] 19. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the steps further comprise:

receiving a third control input from the second player; and  
if the second character is still active in the game, controlling the second game character in response to the third control input received from the second player; and  
if the second character is no longer active in the game, controlling a third game character in response to the third control input received from the second player.

[c20] 20. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing steps comprising:

receiving information about a game being played on a first gaming system;  
transmitting the information about the game to a second gaming system remote from the first gaming system;  
receiving a request from the second gaming system to gate crash the game; and  
in response to receiving the request from the second gaming system, establishing a peer-to-peer connection between the first and second gaming systems.

[c21] 21. The computer-readable medium of claim 20 wherein receiving information about a game includes receiving information about a console-based game.

- [c22] 22. The computer-readable medium of claim 20 wherein receiving information about a game includes receiving information about a console-based game, and wherein receiving a request from the second gaming system to join the console-based game includes receiving a character selection from the second gaming system.
- [c23] 23. The computer-readable medium of claim 20 wherein the steps further comprise:
- transmitting information about the game to a third gaming system;
  - receiving a request from the third gaming system to join the game; and
  - in response to receiving the request from the third gaming system, establishing a peer-to-peer connection between the first and third gaming systems.
- [c24] 24. A computer-based system for implementing a game, the system comprising:
- means for receiving a request from a first player to allow control of a game character to be transitioned from a program routine to a remote player;
  - means for transmitting game-related information to a remote computer in response to the request from the first player; and
  - means for receiving a request from a second player to participate in the game in response to transmitting the information to the remote computer.
- [c25] 25. The system of claim 24 wherein the means for receiving a request from a first player include means for receiving a request from a first player to allow control of a game character to be transitioned from a program routine to a remote player during the game without the knowledge of the first player.

- [c26] 26. The system of claim 24 wherein the first player controls a first game character, and wherein the system further comprises means for enabling the second player to control a second character in response to the request from the second player to participate in the game.
- [c27] 27. The system of claim 24 wherein the first player controls a first game character, and wherein the system further comprises means for transitioning control of a second character from a program routine to the second player in response to the request from the second player to participate in the game.
- [c28] 28. The system of claim 24 wherein the means for receiving a request from a second player to participate in the game include means for receiving a character selection from the second player.
- [c29] 29. The system of claim 24, further comprising:  
means for receiving a first control input from the first player;  
means for controlling a first character in response to the first control input received from the first player;  
means for controlling a second character in response to computer-readable instructions;  
means for receiving a second control input from the second player; and  
means for controlling the second character in response to the second control input received from the second player.
- [c30] 30. The system of claim 24, further comprising means for establishing a peer-to-peer connection between a first gaming system on which the first player is playing and a second gaming system on which the second player is playing.
- [c31] 31. The system of claim 24 wherein the means for transmitting game-related information include means for transmitting information about a console-based game from a first gaming system to a second gaming system.

- [c32] 32. A computer-readable medium including a screen display, the screen display comprising:
- at least one gate crasher selection field configured to receive an input from a first user, wherein the first user input enables control of at least one character in a related game to be transitioned from a program routine to a second player.
- [c33] 33. The computer-readable medium of claim 32 wherein the screen display further comprises:
- at least one gate crasher attribute field configured to receive a user input establishing at least one attribute of potential gate crashers in the related game.
- [c34] 34. The computer-readable medium of claim 32 wherein the screen display further comprises:
- a gate crasher skill level field configured to receive a user input establishing a skill level of potential gate crashers in the related game.
- [c35] 35. The computer-readable medium of claim 32 wherein the screen display further comprises:
- a gate crasher alias field configured to receive a user input identifying an alias of at least one potential gate crasher in the related game.
- [c36] 36. A computer-readable medium including a screen display, the screen display comprising:
- at least one gate crasher selection field configured to receive a user input, wherein the user input enables the user to assume control of a character being controlled by a program routine in a related game being played on a remote gaming system.

- [c37] 37. The computer-readable medium of claim 36 wherein the screen display further comprises:  
one or more fields configured to receive game filtering criteria.
- [c38] 38. The computer-readable medium of claim 36 wherein the screen display further comprises:  
a game type field configured to receive a user input indicating a type of game the user desires to crash.
- [c39] 39. The computer-readable medium of claim 36 wherein the screen display further comprises:  
a skill level field configured to receive a user input indicating a skill level of host players with which the user wishes to compete.
- [c40] 40. The computer-readable medium of claim 36 wherein the screen display further comprises:  
an alias field configured to receive a user input indicating an alias of a host player with which the user wishes to compete.